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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DOHA 000087

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TAGS: [ENRG](#) [KNNP](#) [PARM](#) [PREL](#) [QA](#)
SUBJECT: QATAR WOULD WELCOME U.S. ENGAGEMENT ON NUCLEAR
COOPERATION

REF: A. STATE 8175
[B](#). DOHA 56
[C](#). DOHA 83

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Michael A. Ratney,
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Embassy Doha, in response to Ref A, recommends technical-level engagement on the development of civilian nuclear applications with the GOQ in March, when the Science and Technology Adviser at the Qatar Foundation and the Supreme Council for the Environment and Natural Reserves would both be available. The latter entity proposed a time frame "around March 20," subject to USG availability. Both GOQ entities would welcome a State-led interagency delegation capable of discussing all aspects of potential Qatar-U.S. cooperation.

PROGRAM IN EARLY STAGES

[1](#)2. (C/NF) U.S. NUCLEAR LAB IN QATAR? There is significant debate within the GOQ on the pace that civilian nuclear development should move forward. Dr. Tidu Maini, Science and Technology Adviser to Sheikha Mozah (the Amir's wife and head of the Qatar Foundation), told P/E Chief January 31 that Sheikha Mozah wants Qatar to move forward very quickly. Maini, who has considerable education and work experience in the U.S., confided that he personally is predisposed to making the U.S. the primary partner of Qatar in the nuclear field. He also told P/E Chief privately that he would like to set aside space in the Science and Technology Park currently under construction on the outskirts of Doha for a U.S.-run nuclear laboratory.

[1](#)3. (C/NF) INFIGHTING ON TIME TABLE: Maini described the Supreme Council for the Environment and Natural Reserves, headed by Khaled Ghanim Al-Ali, as determined to push forward on peaceful uses of nuclear technology in partnership with the Gulf Cooperative Council (GCC). He cited the Council and the Ministry of Energy as two key governmental actors who favor a "slow approach" to nuclear development. Sheikha Mozah and the Qatar Foundation, on the other hand he said, believe decisions must be taken quickly so that Qatar can begin educating and training a generation of Qataris with sufficient skills and background in the field. Maini added that the Qatar Foundation was giving serious consideration to the construction of a "demonstration nuclear plant," but this information was highly sensitive and not to be shared with other Qataris, including government officials.

[1](#)4. (C) DISCUSSIONS WITH FRANCE AND U.S. PLAYERS: Issa Al-Ghanim, Planning Director and Head of the Renewable Energy

Committee for Qatar Petroleum (under the Ministry of Energy and Industry), told P/E Chief and EconOff January 29 Qatar was "looking at the feasibility" of developing civilian nuclear power. Whether Qatar would do so alone or in partnership with the GCC - or bilaterally with another nation - was all on the table, he said. Al-Ghanim said he meets with companies who approach him on cooperation, but "we don't want to run very fast." One aspect under consideration was the hiring of specialists to advise Qatar on how to proceed, according to Al-Ghanim. He said General Electric had been in touch with his office and that Qatar had sought advice from the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission on regulatory and safety issues associated with nuclear power. Al-Ghanim noted that General Electric does not want to operate a nuclear power station for Qatar. France, however, was very much interested in this aspect of cooperation. The French oil company Total and Electricite de France (EDF) were in discussions with Al-Ghanim, and the GOQ had a memorandum of understanding with EDF which touched on nuclear cooperation as one aspect of their joint work. Al-Ghanim confirmed a 10-15 year timeline (see Ref B) for Qatar's construction of a nuclear plant for electrical and water supply needs.

15. (C) USE OF RADIOISOTOPES: Qatar University Professor Ilham Al-Qaradawi told P/E Chief January 31 that development of nuclear power for peaceful purposes in Qatar for now was "all talk." She said there were collective efforts with the GCC as well as efforts being undertaken by individual GCC states. Al-Qaradawi described Qatar as in the "pre-feasibility or feasibility" stage of development. It was her understanding that the IAEA had drafted a feasibility study for the GOQ. Al-Qaradawi said she is a nuclear medicine technology consultant for hospitals on producing radioisotopes that would require production in Qatar. She

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noted that established hydrocarbon companies in Qatar also rely on radioisotopes for their work and stated that the GOQ had yet to decide whether to pursue the construction of a cyclotron or research reactor. It was clear to her as an educator, however, that the GOQ wanted to create an educational capacity in the field. Texas A&M, which has a campus in Doha, was the likely partner, and Al-Qaradawi noted that she would likely travel to College Station in March for further discussions in this area. (Note: Texas A&M faculty visited Doha in early January and held separate meetings with her and Embassy staff.) She also observed that all of her nuclear physics students were women; male Qataris were more interested in driving fast cars, but she said (with a smile) this could change if Qatar were to develop a nuclear capacity.

16. (C) BELGIANS HAVE ALREADY VISITED: The Deputy Secretary General of the Supreme Council for the Environment and Natural Reserves, Dr. Ahmed Al-Khataybeh, told P/E Chief and PolOff February 3 that the Supreme Council had "complete responsibility" for all nuclear-related matters in Qatar and stated his office was the clearinghouse for all domestic and foreign governmental, non-governmental, and educational organizations wishing to approach the GOQ on nuclear issues. He said the Council would be pleased to organize a U.S. technical team visit "around March 20," depending on USG availability. He added that Qatar held technical discussions with a Belgian team (the only other team to have visited Doha) in late January. Al-Khataybeh, who was previously the deputy director of nuclear power applications in Jordan, said the GOQ aimed to train future Qatari nuclear engineers in the U.S. and elsewhere. He said there was also interest in establishing educational programs for such training in Qatar, and he hoped the U.S. would be a partner in this endeavor.

17. (C) NUCLEAR RESEARCH REACTOR?: Asked how Qatar views the GCC role in developing nuclear technology, Al-Khataybeh responded that the GCC maintained a "regional perspective," whereas the member states were responsible for "national implementation" of the vision. He observed that GCC members

could proceed at different speeds in developing water and electricity - projects that the GCC heads of state had approved. Al-Khataybeh reported that the IAEA was preparing a feasibility study on establishing a nuclear research reactor in Qatar for training purposes. Returning to the need to educate Qataris in the field, Al-Khataybeh predicted a shortage of nuclear engineers worldwide in the coming years as countries look to nuclear energy to supplant hydrocarbon resources. Asked when Qatar expected its first nuclear plant to go on line, Al-Khataybeh said the internal GOQ timeline was 10-15 years, but 15-25 years was more realistic.

A GOOD TIME FOR TECHNICAL-LEVEL DISCUSSIONS

18. (C) Embassy Doha recommends that a technical team visit Doha for discussions with the interlocutors identified in this message. We believe any new approach to the GOQ on the political level about the civilian development of nuclear power should not occur before a team of technical experts has direct discussions with Qatari officials. During his January 22 discussion with the Amir, Energy Secretary Bodman noted that the challenge in developing nuclear power is to prevent the technology from being used for bad purposes (see Ref C). Secretary Bodman described the U.S. Global Nuclear Energy

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Partnership (GNEP) as encouraging development of nuclear power for positive purposes in ways that are not conducive to proliferation. Underscoring the UAE's growing interest in the field, Secretary Bodman told the Amir that 19 countries were thus far participating and expressed confidence that Qatar will join - not right away but over time as the country gets more interested in nuclear power. (The Amir responded that Qatar "will be a little lazy for a while" because it has large quantities of natural gas.)

RATNEY